

Magazine Feature Section

GRIT, TALENT, COURAGE

WILL WIN IN BASEBALL

IF WINE WOMEN and SONG are DISCARDED



BY J. B. SHERIDAN.

THE money that may be made and the career that may be opened to a young man in baseball has been attracting a deal of attention during the last month. A threatened strike of the great professional baseball players focused public interest on that point. The players had been drawing enormous salaries, owing to keen competition for their services. The removal of the Federal League from the sphere of baseball activities practically removed all competition, and, to some extent, placed the player at the mercy of the employer.

The elder players, especially the men who had fattened on the abnormally high salaries of the Federal League period, tried to organize a general strike of players, ostensibly to correct certain minor alleged grievances such as small clubs failing to pay transportation for players who reported for service in the spring, etc. This was only a "blind." The real object of the strike was to force the club owners to standardize salaries at war-time figures. The strike never took place. There was no sound foundation for it. It is difficult to get sympathy for strikers who have been receiving from \$600 to \$2000 a month in salaries, living at the best hotels and traveling in pullmans at their employers' expense.

Then the American Federation of Labor wisely refused to take the Players' Fraternity into membership. The \$1000 a month baseball men had been fraternizing with the \$1000 a year mechanic to get the assistance of the latter in a "sympathy" strike. Therefore, the strike was called off before the date on which it was scheduled to take place, and the players were left to bargain, as best they may, with their employers.

Salaries to Be Reduced.

THAT there will be a general reduction of salaries from the war-day standard to the legitimate standard is assured. The players got immense salaries during the days of Federal League competition, 1913-14-15-16. The game did not yield revenue enough to pay these enormous expenses. The club owners and their money worked for less than the strong arm of one pitcher. So a change is about to come over the spirit of the scene.

Still, baseball salaries and opportunities will be good enough to attract the energetic American youth who loves and who can play the game. It is our purpose here to study baseball as a profession for young men.

Let it first be thoroughly understood that baseball should be considered as a mere temporary occupation. The average life of a major league baseball player is something like five years. Men like Cy Young, the famous pitcher; Anson, the never-to-be-forgotten captain of the great Chicago team of the 80s; Wagner, Wallace, Lelie and a few others, played for from twenty to twenty-seven years. These are exceptions. The average player has from five to ten years as a productive baseball career.

On the whole, it may be stated that the player is through at 30. Very few carry their excellence over 35.

Therefore, the young man of ambition, prudence and foresight should figure upon quitting play at not later than 20 years old.

"What sort of a profession is it that offers

nothing to a man over 30?" will be asked.

It is this sort of a profession. It enables a thrifty and foresighted young man to make much more money up to the age of thirty than he would make in any other profession, and it gives him an opportunity to study, prepare and assume another profession or business whenever he finds that baseball no longer is profitable.

The great advantage about baseball as a profession to the struggling young man is that he may go to school, college, study during the winter, or amass enough money to start in business.

Good Money Only in Big Leagues.

THE great objection to baseball as a profession is, first, that it is but temporary; second, that it is only in the higher forms of the game, in the big leagues, or, at best, in the second class leagues, that a young man can make enough money to make it worth while as his sole and only occupation.

In other words, you must be a genius, or very close to it, to attain even a moderate success in baseball.

However, it is best to set forth the facts in the case and let the reader decide for himself.

It has been the pleasant custom to assume that every American boy is born a patriot, a prince and a baseball player. Not one in 200 American boys is a born ballplayer. For many reasons, not more than one in 200 boys ever reaches the professional baseball field. Of the 5000 professionals who work every summer, not more than 250 can be classed as wholly successful. Some of the others may be comers, some goers, but only 250 are in the full flower of success.

Thus baseball is an arduous profession. Chances of success in it are few. This adds to its disadvantages as a profession. Many feel called, but few are chosen. The chances of attaining success are so small that the wise father may be pardoned for advising his boy to devote all his efforts to other enterprises.

One of every 200 American boys has potentialities of baseball success in him. These boys usually attain capacity to earn money playing baseball when they are 19 years old. At that age they can make from \$1 to \$10 a game playing what is known as semiprofessional ball, which means one game a week, usually played on Saturday or on Sunday.

After a year or two of this sort of play, or at 21, a young man should be ready for his first real professional engagement. This engagement should be in a league of the sixth class, technically known as Class D in baseball.

He will receive for his services from \$30 to \$125 a month, depending upon the prosperity of the league in question, and his own desirability. Pitchers and catchers will, on the whole, receive \$25 a month more than infielders or outfielders, unless, indeed, the outfielder or infielder be of a particularly desirable sort.

Minor League Seasons Short.

WHILE a salary of from \$50 to \$125 a month may appear large to the youth of 21, it must be remembered that the season in these minor leagues is of but four and one-half months' duration. Thus the player's entire baseball stipend for his first two years would be from \$400 to \$600 a year.

Half of the player's board and living expenses will be paid. He must pay ten weeks' board and expenses and clothe himself. A thrifty lad can get by during a season on an expense of \$140, which will leave him from \$260 to \$460 in his pocket when the season closes on Labor Day.

It is then up to the boy to go to college or to work. Many boys will get through the college year on from \$260 to \$460.

This is what makes baseball so desirable, if not as a profession, as an adjunct to a young man's earning capacity.

The boy who must work his way through college will find baseball a very great assistance. It is true that he must "cut" his college work short on May 1 every year, and thus lose six weeks' important work and examination, but this can be made up in due course of time.

Having played for two years in a Class D

league, a youth should be ready for promotion to Class C, which will pay \$25 a month more, to Class B, which will pay \$50 a month more, to Class A, which will pay \$200 a month, or \$1100 a season. Many young men advance much faster than this, others much more slowly. We are taking the standard player who keeps up with his class.

A year in Class A should fit the youth for

Class AA, which will pay from \$1200 to \$1800 for five months' work. One or two years in

Class AA will fit him for the major leagues, which pay a beginner, ordinarily, \$2000 a year for six months' work. Once in the major

leagues he may earn from \$2000 to \$10,000 a

year. It may be said that only very exceptional men earn more than \$5000 a year in the major leagues, that the standard salary for a first-class player, one not a star but a sure, day in and day out "regular," is about \$3500 a year.

We now have followed the young man through six years of play, two as a semiprofessional, two in Class D, one in Class C or B, one in Class AA. We took him up at 18 and he is now 24 years old, the best age for players to enter the major leagues. Some few enter much younger, but the average will be about 25 years old. Here it may be said that all baseball players, actors and athletes are womanlike in their deterioration of age. The 20-year-old player begins by subtracting two years from his real age. At 24 he subtracts three years, at 30 he subtracts five years, at 40 he subtracts ten years. Over 40, he becomes a child again.

Reasons for Fighting Age.

THERE are excellent reasons for this. The younger a boy is the better it is understood is his chance for development, improvement. If a boy is but 18, a great many shortcomings are forgiven him that would be charged to him if he were 20.

"He will grow stronger. He will hit better. He will improve. He is only 18," say the managers. "If he were 22 he should be a better player than he is." So, too, when he grows older. His youth is an asset to him. If he seeks an engagement, his age cuts a "large" figure. A man is valuable according to the years he has in him. He may be worth \$5000 if he is 25. If he is 31, he may be worth \$1500.

So, more than the prima donna or the star actress, the baseball player is the perennial youth.

It has taken the young player from three to six years to reach the "big leagues," attain the summit of his ambition, the "big show," as he calls the major leagues. He has now a chance to obtain ten years' employment at a salary that will average \$3500 for six months' play. He puts in just one more month of training. For this he gets no salary, but his expenses are all paid.

While preparing himself for the big berth in the big leagues, the player has spent from four to six years and earned an average salary of \$1250 a year for five months' play. His living expenses during the playing months of these years should not have been more than \$200 a season. All of which leaves him, on an average,

\$950 annual clear profit from his baseball season. He is at liberty to dispose of this \$950 as he pleases. If he works he can, no doubt, save all of the \$950, and at the average age of 24 will find himself with about \$5000 in pocket. If he should elect to take a college course, his bank balance will be much reduced, but he will have a large balance of accomplishment and of efficiency to his credit.

Has Personal Following.

IT may be remarked here that the fact that he is a baseball player of some merit facilitates the commercial progress of a young man. He can obtain winter jobs as salesman, clerk, mechanic, etc., that he would not find ready to his hand were he not a man of some acquaintance and with some personal "following."

Hence, it will be seen that, even if he should not reach the "big show," a young player may secure quite a neat little competency by the time he enters his 24th year. He can have \$5000 in bank. Few young business men, who had to depend on their own labor, have \$5000 in bank when they are 24 years old.

If the player succeeds in the major leagues, we may assume that his fortune is made. In five years he will make \$17,500. He will save half of that. This, added to the \$5000 saved in the minor leagues will give him, considering compound interest or reasonable successful investment, \$20,000.

If he has spent money in studying a profession, he will not have quite \$20,000. But four years given to a college course should cost him not more than \$4000. So the hardy, careful, managing young man can play baseball for twelve years, learn a profession and find himself well over \$20,000 in bank after he reaches the age of 30.

It would be well for all baseball players if they were obliged by law to quit when they reached the age of 30. From that time onward they slow up, and certainly there are few of them who retain their best form after the age of 30. To be sure there are a few players who have done their best work after they had reached the age of 35. The average player, however, begins to slow up after having reached the 30th milestone, and there are few men who remain in the big leagues after they have seen 35 years pass by.

To be sure there are careers open as man-

agers, etc., which pay large salaries, but such

positions are rare and precarious. I would not

advise any young man to take up baseball with the idea of making it a life work. It should be merely a stepping stone to something better, to something more enduring.

Championships Help.

IN computing the earning ability of a baseball player, we have regarded only the exact sums received as salary. Many baseball players make much more than their salaries. In the major leagues there is always the large sum derived from the world's championship. These sums amount to from \$2500 for players of losing, to \$4000 for players of winning, teams. Many players make money in post-season exhibitions, though these have been discontinued for the present by order of the baseball authorities. Coaching college teams is another source of revenue.

Many of the high-salaried men make material additions to their incomes during the winter. Following the ancient rule that "it is given to him who hath," it is the high-salaried, that is, the famous, star rather than the average player who makes large between-season incomes.

It is said that the famous Cobb makes \$12,500 a year playing baseball and quite as much from signing his name to newspaper and magazine stories, selling automobiles, playing in moving pictures, endorsing advertised articles, etc. Mathewson, the once great pitcher of New York, who is now manager of the Cincinnati club, has long conducted an insurance agency which yielded him a handsome income. Edward Konetchy, the giant first baseman of the Boston Nationals, sells cigars. Fielder Jones, manager of the St. Louis Americans, has large lumber interests in the Northwest. William Sweeney, a second baseman of fame some three years ago, retired to a valuable insurance agency which he had built up while a player.

Buying farms and city property is a favorite investment of players. It is unlikely that they make any money off the farm while they are playing, but they manage to "break even," and the increase in value in the land over a period of ten years is, on the whole, 100 per cent. Some players who have dramatic and musical talent, make these pay them during the winter. Hundreds of players have trades, occupations or professions that they find remunerative in winter.

Hugh High, the star left fielder of the Yankees, was careful to learn the plumbing trade before he took up baseball. He conducts a plumbing business every winter which yields him the usual fabled fortunes of the craft. John Miller, first baseman of the St. Louis Nationals, gets \$6000 a year for playing baseball, and conducts a profitable hotel business in Kearney, N. J. Speaker, the famous center fielder of Cleveland, has a large cattle ranch in Texas.

Players Who Are Wealthy.

SPEAKER was a cattleman before he became a baseball player. Cravath of the Philadelphia Nationals is a real estate man in California. Frank Chance, who managed the Chicago Nationals, and who is now managing Los Angeles, always has maintained a valuable orange grove.

There have been players who, even in the days when salaries were one-half of what they are today, became rich in baseball. Chief of these

Prince Fortunati is Charles Comiskey, owner of the Chicago Americans. Comiskey played baseball for fifteen years. His first engagement in St. Louis was at the salary of \$125 a month. He was getting \$7500 a year when he retired in 1891. He then bought a club at St. Paul, which did not prove a money maker. In 1900 he organized a club in Chicago which has since made him \$2,000,000. Win, lose or draw, the Chicago Americans will make \$250,000 every year.

Comiskey is one of the few players who have become rich club owners. Al Spalding, a great pitcher of the 70s, became owner of the Chicago Nationals and of the immense sporting goods business which bears his name. Spalding must have become the richest of all baseball players. His wealth at his death was estimated at \$15,000,000.

Albert Reach, the first salaried player, at one time owned the Philadelphia Nationals, and, like Spalding, became immensely wealthy in the sporting goods business. His partner, Benjamin Shibe, started in baseball by covering balls for amateur players around Philadelphia, where he had a small shoe-repairing shop. Shibe now owns half of the Philadelphia Americans and half of the great A. J. Reach Sporting Goods Company. Covering baseballs made him many times a millionaire. George Wright, shortstop of the unbeaten Cincinnati Reds of 1893, is half owner of the big sporting goods house of Wright & Ditson.

Money in Baseball.

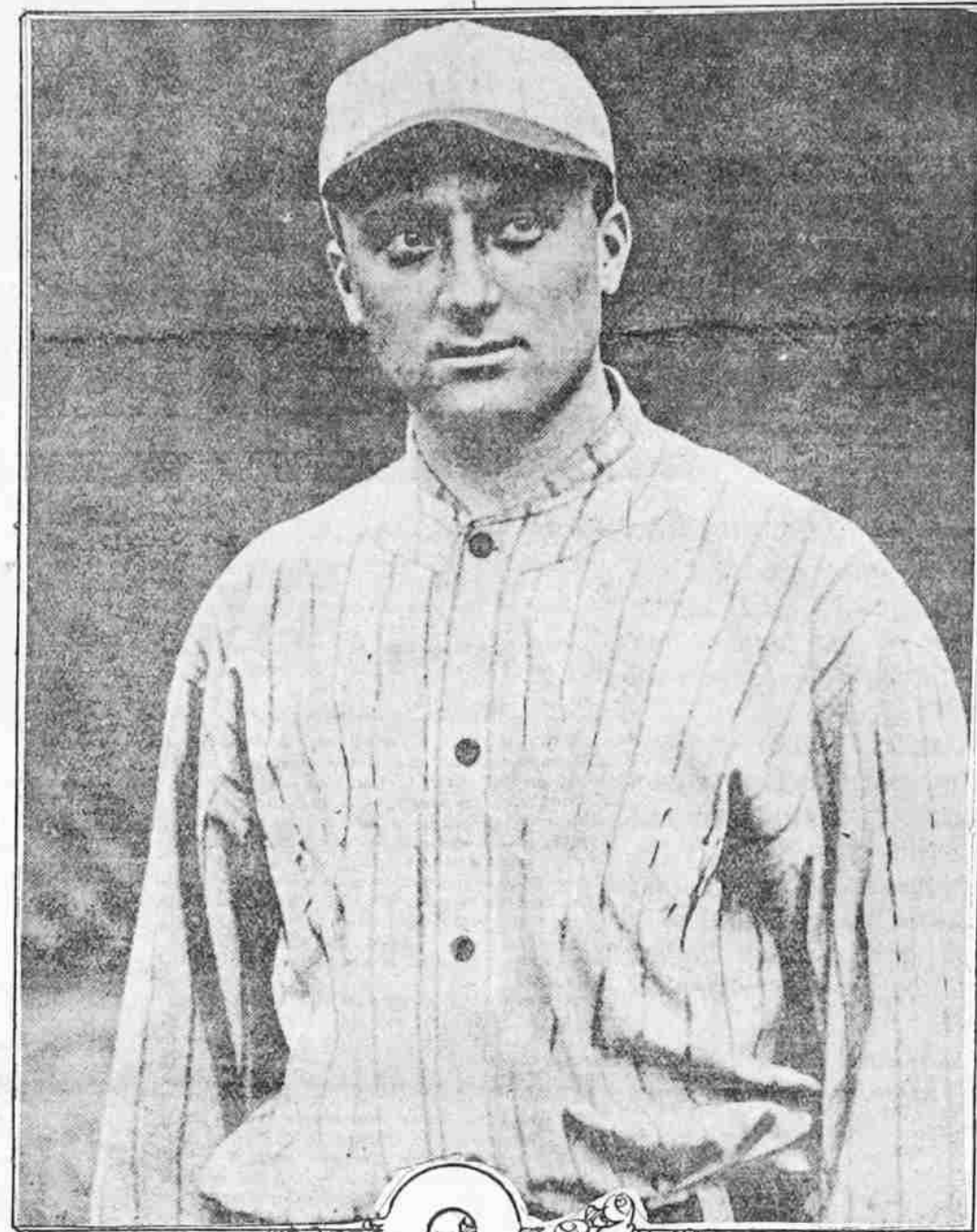
THERE is money in baseball for the youth who has the talent, grit and courage to get that money out. Of course, the period from 1911 to 1916 saw unreasonable salaries paid.

For instance, Lee Magee, the outfielder of the New York Americans, began his career at Springfield, Ill., in 1909, and was paid \$90 a month for four and one-half months of play, or \$405 for the entire season. Magee got \$6000, or \$1500 a month, during the years 1915-16. So Magee's weekly salary after five years in baseball was equal to his annual salary when he began. Such instances might be enumerated indefinitely.

All this gold is only for the chosen. A boy must have natural talent, and he must develop it thoroughly. He must rigorously deny himself, train like a Spartan and control his appetites like a Trappist monk. Late hours, wine, women and song, beautiful dining, cigarettes and moving picture shows must be foreign to the life of the young man who would attain success as a baseball player.

All the clubs insist upon their players abstaining from liquors, and demand that they shall be in bed not later than 11 p. m. They must devote six hours a day to practicing and to playing. No game calls for greater fitness of body and keenness of mind. The eye, the ear, the hand, the foot and the courage must all be as perfect as is possible. A weak eye, arm or leg, a dull intellect, a faint heart, never attains a fortune in baseball.

From the foregoing it will be seen that baseball offers much to the young man as a temporary profession. The training itself, the discipline, the travel, the assurance and polish it gives, apart from the financial allurements, makes baseball worth the while of the boy who may have the talent and the self-control necessary to succeed at it.



LEE MAGEE